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ABSTRACT

This document contains: (1) the report of the University of Michigan Committee on Student Evaluation of Courses and its recommendations; (2) a report on student opinion of courses and teaching dated 10-2-53; and (3) a report of the Student Course Evaluation Committee appointed by the Student Government Council and dated 1968. The first report discussed the potential uses of evaluation for the teaching faculty, the department administrator, and the student, reviewed some of the potential misuses, and concludes that the potential benefits of evaluation called for the development of a course evaluation instrument to be used throughout the University. The second report presented a history of student appraisal of the faculty of the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, appraised the old student-opinion program and its contribution to instruction, discussed the defects of student ratings, especially in administrative use, and made recommendations. The third report discussed the defects of student ratings, especially in administrative use, and made recommendations. The third report discussed and evaluated the 41-item questionnaire distributed in March 1968 in 45 courses, primarily of interest to freshmen. (AF)

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The University of Michigan

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSES*

November, 1968

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Report of the Committee on Student Evaluation of Courses

The problem of evaluating instruction is closely tied to identifying the purposes of the university, the goals it sets for itself, the objectives it sets for its students. At its most general level, the university seeks to communicate knowledge to its students, to enable them to develop principles and concepts which hopefully they can later apply broadly to new concerns and challenges, to motivate them to value intellectual activity and to understand the world around them. In effect, then, and not surprisingly, teaching in the university is directed toward the student. Whether and how successfully the university as a whole and the teacher as an individual achieve these purposes should continually be evaluated. The evaluation should be made by the teacher himself, his professional peers, his department and the college. Full evaluation requires that in some concrete, reliable way the students themselves be given the opportunity to contribute their opinions.

Despite the clear fact that teaching at least theoretically has always been student-oriented, faculties have sometimes balked at evaluation of their teaching by students. Yet students do have a unique perspective from which any teacher can benefit, and often a perspective as valid as those applied by instructors or administrators. A student is capable of reporting and to some extent evaluating his own classroom experience. He can provide guides by which the teacher may be able to determine how clearly he has communicated his objectives to his students, how students perceive the relevance and usefulness of the subject matter, what reactions they have to the reading material assigned and classwork expected of them. And while an instructor should never be bound to accept unreservedly any of these student judgments, certainly he can learn from them something about how to reach his students, what interests and motivates them, and what it is that they expect from him as an instructor and the university as a shaping force in their lives.

The results of a carefully conceived and administered student opinion program can help to provide some reliable bases for developing standards of good teaching. Studies of student evaluations give evidence that student ratings provide good indications of the instructor's personal effectiveness in class, his rapport with his students, and his ability to organize and manage his course. Furthermore, criteria by which students judge their professors remain relatively stable--a teacher rated well five years ago will likely receive the same rating from students this year and next. Clearly students are not as capable of judging the validity of an instructor's objectives; however, having spelled out those objectives, an instructor can sometimes determine from student evaluations how well they have been met or whether they can be met.

An important corollary to students commenting on their instructor's performance is the responsibility this task places on the learner to provide honest, well-thought-out, philosophically sound critiques, not only of his instructor's work but also of his own goals as a learner. Hopefully the opportunity to comment will carry with it the recognition that any useful criticism, any comments worthy of attention, must be more than superficial

complaints or unadulterated praise; likewise any revisions in instructional procedure which stem from student opinion deserve not only the student's attention, but also his cooperation. Giving students an opportunity to participate in the evaluation of teaching should necessarily then acquaint him with the concerns of the teacher, elevate his own standards, both of performance and aspiration, and enable him to share in the responsibility for successful experimentation.

THE POTENTIAL USES OF EVALUATION

Professionally-constructed student evaluation instruments can provide valuable information to three campus groups: (1) the instructor, who should be able to gauge student reaction to his teaching and to use student opinion as a basis for revising his procedures; (2) the administrator, who currently often lacks adequate information for processing faculty assignments, rewarding good teaching, and adjusting such learning variables as class size, use of new instructional media, etc.; (3) the student, who in an institution the size of The University of Michigan is often bereft of adequate counseling aid and adequate information about course content and approach. The uses of student opinion forms have been carefully laid out in Appendix 1, the 1953 faculty report on student opinion of courses and teaching, and will therefore only be summarized below.

(1) The Teaching Faculty

To evaluate teaching most directly is to evaluate the extent to which students have learned what teachers are seeking to teach. However to make such learning possible, instructors should have some awareness of the conditions for successful learning and should have some reliable means for discovering to what extent their own classrooms promote or discourage these conditions. An instructor may discover that by making his own purposes, direction, or objectives in a course clear to the students he can promote greater readiness on their part to accept his teaching methods. Basic feedback between faculty and students, which so often is lacking in large lecture courses and even smaller upper-class courses, would provide the teacher with a clearer understanding of student expectations and goals and perhaps even encourage him to make revisions to meet at least those he feels to be important.

(2) The Department Administrator

Reliable student evaluation procedure is one means by which administrators can measure the excellence of faculty and departments as a whole. No decisions of promotion, salary increase, tenure, dismissal, etc. will rest on such results. However, student evaluations might be one way of singling out those professors who, for instance, relate well to introductory students, or to advanced students, enabling a department chairman to make teaching assignments on the basis of teaching effectiveness as well as on other requirements. Evaluation by students could provide serious impetus to department and higher level administration officials to re-examine traditional criteria for recognizing excellence in teaching,

should there be discrepancies between student and faculty evaluation criteria. Evaluation data from students might find broader use on the department level in deliberations over size of classes, investments in new media, etc. Finally, on the university level, the combined questionnaire results might be an added and subsidiary measure to those already in use of attempts to determine departmental quality. In any case, the data provided will at least be explicit and known to the faculty whereas now rumor and assumption enter into such evaluations.

(3) The Student

The first and most important contribution of published and reliable student evaluation data would be to provide students with effective counseling assistance when selecting courses, hopefully from the point of view of both majors and non-majors. On the basis of objective results, students could "bury" the rumor system for teacher and course selection and have at their command a more reliable method for deciding which courses might be suitable to their needs and interests. Secondly, course evaluation, as discussed earlier, forces on the student responsibility for effective criticism and allows him in at least one way to participate in the shaping of his own educational experience. This responsibility carries with it the need to become more aware of what goes into teaching a course, what it is that he as a student must set as his own standards and goals, etc. This is an important means by which the university can offer students evidence that they are not merely recipients of an education, but that the effectiveness of teachers and courses intimately concerns and affects each student, and ultimately the university as a whole.

MISUSES OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS

No definition of good teaching has yet been developed which can both be stated simply and evaluated with conviction. As the 1953 committee report concluded:

> The educational contribution of faculty members must somehow be judged, but judgment is inherently complex and difficult. Excellence does not lie in a few simple traits, but in a whole constellation of qualities. These pertain as much to the background planning and organization of materials into a course, often without textbook or precedent, and to the defining of goals, setting of standards and devising of methods, as they do to actual classroom performance.

The report continues to delineate what the faculty considered the major dangers involved in using student evaluations without careful recognition of their limitations, with which this committee is in substantial agreement. The first caution in recommending the use of student evaluations is that no teacher's ability as a teacher can be reduced to numerical ratings. Involved in the complete evaluation of his classroom effectiveness are issues and qualities of which students are neither cognizant observers nor capable judges (See Appendix I, The Peterson Report). Administrators must be careful when deciding

how much weight to attribute to student opinion, short of ignoring it entirely. In the same vein, administrators must avoid using the student evaluation results in one course or one section of one course as indicators of the teacher's performance in all courses or in all sections of a single course.

Secondly, student opinion should be considered directly only on the department level where ranking members are aware of each faculty member's contributions, the problems he faces, his background and research interests, his personality and attitudes. Central university officials should not have access to the questionnaires but only to published results. However, for determining salary, tenure, and promotion, recommendation of the department with the explicit knowledge of the faculty member concerned could be made to the appropriate committees. Since this committee recommends a public set of general data be available with the specific responses available only to the faculty member, the emphasis should be on feedback to the professor.

Having carefully studied the past deliberations and experiences of both students and faculties at this university and others on the question of student evaluation of courses, the Committee concluded that the faculty should favor a student produced and administered course evaluation instrument and provide technical assistance to this student activity to maximize its reliability and validity (See Appendix II for student report).

In addition to the rationale for student course evaluation provided above, we were in agreement that:

(1) Such an effort is an inherent right of the students regardless of the faculty position;

(2) The climate on this and scores of other campuses demands some such effort;

(3) It provides a self-gratifying learning experience for the students which pulls them farther into responsible and positive action in the university community;

(4) It would be a valuable resource for faculty development; and finally,

(5) The students will proceed with this effort with the support of the Student Government Council regardless of our stance (See Report of Student Committee in Appendix II).

With these conclusions in mind, the Committee held several meetings with the student committee working toward a course evaluation program to determine the extent of ~~mental~~ mutual effort. It was decided that our Committee should maintain its independence and make no commitments to the student group although there was considerable overlapping membership between the two. It was agreed that our charge from the Senate included the development of an experimental course evaluation instrument and the gathering of data

which would allow us to test the practicality of using a standard instrument throughout the university. After careful study of scores of previous attempts here and elsewhere, the committee constructed two alternate forms and data was gathered in several courses of L. S. & A. during Term II of 1968. These data were analyzed over the summer and the instrument was shortened and corrected. The results of this work have been shared with the current student committee and it is their intention of incorporating our findings in their instrument (See Appendix).

Early in the Committee's deliberations, it was agreed that equally important to course evaluation from a guidance point of view, is course content and format information. Conferences were held with Dean Shaw and the Administrative Board of L. S. & A. to develop a questionnaire to be used by faculty to describe their courses. The Dean's office took over the responsibility for updating and expanding the course description book now available to students in the L. S. & A. Counseling Office. The Committee recommends that other schools adopt this policy, although it recognizes that the need for such a scheme in other units may not be so great.

Recommendations:

1. The faculty give twenty minutes of class time to the Student Committee for collection of evaluation data this term. The argument being that representative sampling can only be obtained if the faculty cooperates in this manner.

2. The faculty appoint a committee to maintain liaison with the student committee and provide technical consultation to them. The argument being that this will insure continuity of effort and quality of a product which will be attempted, at least this year, regardless of the faculty's position.

3. The material should be available directly to the faculty member for his use and by mutual agreement of the faculty member and his chairman and/or departmental committee to his college executive committee. In each case, the faculty member should be made aware of the conclusions derived from these data before they are used for any purpose other than direct feedback to him or as information in student course selection through the student committee.

Appendix I

STUDENT OPINION OF COURSES AND TEACHING

I

Recommendations

On the basis of considerations developed herein, the Committee appointed in October, 1952, to review the experience with "student evaluation of the faculty" recommends:

1. That the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts shall conduct annually, through the departments a student-opinion questionnaire on courses and teaching;

(a) that this questionnaire shall in part be uniform throughout the College and in part reflect the special situations and purposes of departments and individual teachers;

(b) that the College part of the questionnaire shall consist of broad questions that call only for comments and verbal characterizations, with no number or letter ratings; the departmental part of more detailed questions, preferably without the use of number or letter ratings, but with the door left open for departmental experimentation;

(c) that the main object of the plan shall be to improve instruction and that any administrative use of the results, especially in matters of salary increase and promotion, shall take place at the department level, and then only on the basis of departmental decision, after full discussion within the department;

(d) that the form of the questionnaire and the procedure in handling it shall aim especially at eliciting deliberate, considered student response, in the interest of guiding students toward standards of real educational significance as well as of making the results as meaningful as possible.

2. That the College shall establish a standing committee to work out details of the College part of the questionnaire and of related procedures in accordance with the principles stated above, to advise departments, as requested, in working out their part of the questionnaire, and to stand in a general supervisory relation to the plan.

II

Historical Background

The following is a summary of the history of student appraisal of the Faculty in this College and of the work of the present Committee. (Numbers in parentheses refer to Minutes of the College.)

Early steps. In 1931-1932 a committee of the University Council headed by Professor A. H. White proposed that information be collected on the quality of services rendered by faculty members. In 1935 and 1938, in addresses before the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, President Ruthven urged that steps be taken to raise the standards for promotion. In October, 1938, the chapter appointed a committee with Professor J. K. Pollock as chairman to study the matter. In May, 1939, the chapter endorsed a report of the committee which proposed an elaborate plan for evaluation of teaching and research by colleagues and students. This report was circulated in the College and in November, 1939, the Executive Committee was asked to study it carefully (575-576). A committee headed by Professor Campbell Bonner was appointed. In March, 1940, a proposal of this committee urging implementation of the A.A.U.P. plan was approved by the Faculty (610-611, 616,622), and a sub-committee of the Executive Committee consisting of Professors Robert C. Angell and John W. Bradshaw undertook the task. After obtaining only a negligible expression of faculty opinion via a questionnaire, this committee offered a detailed proposal which was adopted in March, 1941 (711-713, 719-720, 739-742).

Evaluation plan of 1941-1943. The plan had these features: Departmental committees were to submit to the Executive Committee of the College appraisals of the qualifications of department members with regard to research, teaching, professional standing, administrative work, and personal traits. Student ratings were to be held each year. Department appraisals and student rating forms were to be filed in the Dean's office and were to be accessible to the individuals concerned, to department chairmen, and through them to the Executive Committee of the College. Because of the War, no rating by students was undertaken, and in 1943 the plan was suspended.

Plan of 1948-1952. The Faculty voted in 1947 to revive the suspended plan, with appropriate modifications, and a committee with Professor Amos H. Hawley as Chairman was appointed to work out the details (1353, 1361, 1376). The committee reported early in 1948 and the report was accepted at the February meeting (1407).

The plan, as in 1941, called for broad appraisals by departmental committees and for student ratings, with the latter used by the committees as one among a variety of elements in the evaluation of teaching. The forms, after analysis, were to be returned to the individuals concerned. This program was to be reviewed after a trial period of five years.

In practice the elaborate plan for assessing faculty services by departmental committees appeared to be unworkable, and that part of the program was soon given up. Since it was the heart of the plan, the whole program probably should have been suspended at once and reviewed by the Faculty. This is a reasonable inference from the 1948 report, from what can be learned now of the attitude of the committee making it, and from the resolution of the Faculty. The student part of the evaluation was continued, however, and on three occasions some 40,000 blanks were filled in and returned. Results were analyzed statistically and tabulations circulated to various offices. The forms have been held in the Dean's office, instead of being returned to instructors, as the 1948 report provided. (In the opinion of the Committee, the forms should now be returned or destroyed.)

The present Committee. With the end of the five-year period approaching, the Faculty in the spring of 1952 discussed at length a proposal to terminate the scheme of student ratings (1743-1744, 1750, 1774, 1786-1788, 1791-1794). The outcome was a decision to establish a new committee to review the whole question, and the present Committee was appointed by Dean Odegaard in October, 1952.

This Committee met every two weeks or oftener during the academic year 1952-1953, and also operated extensively through sub-committees. No further general investigation of faculty opinion seemed necessary--indeed a wide range of viewpoint was represented within the Committee--but the thinking of a number of groups and individuals was explored carefully. Four department chairmen met with the Committee on one occasion and, on another, eight younger faculty members at the level at which appraisal of performance is most critical. Professor Hawley reviewed the work and thinking of the earlier committee of which he was chairman, and Dean Odegaard discussed the problem with the Committee at another meeting. The Committee also met with the Executive Committee of the College.

At one meeting the Committee heard the views of a selected group of students outstanding as campus leaders and in scholarship. The Committee also participated in a College conference, attended by a considerable group of students, at which this problem was discussed.

As part of its investigation the Committee sent a brief questionnaire to a number of leading institutions and forty-two replies were received. Of these twenty-five reported some sort of general scheme of student rating of the Faculty, and sixteen an intention to continue it. Student ratings are reducible to statistics in about half the schools, but in most instances the results are available only to the instructor. The Committee has also had available a number of studies of the same problem made at other universities.

III

Student Opinion and the Improvement of Instruction

The considerations which should enter into an appraisal of the old student-opinion program, and the desirability of a new one, fall roughly into two groups. One involves the possible contributions to instruction; the other the possible aid to administrators in matters of salary increase and promotion. Faculty support for such a program rests mainly on considerations in the first category; and in recommending a new program the present Committee is influenced almost wholly, though not exclusively, by these considerations.

Student opinion of courses and of teaching, if properly gathered and sensibly used, can be helpful (1) in suggesting improvements to the teacher in his classroom performance and course offerings, (2) in providing information that may assist department administrators in staff assignments; (3) in giving students a sense of participation in the educational process and in elevating their standards.

Use by the instructor concerned. The most obvious assistance is in certain aspects of classroom performance. Students should have the opportunity to tell their instructor whether he is audible or inaudible, whether he speaks too rapidly or too slowly, whether he has mannerisms that irritate and distract. They may comment usefully on various features of his lecturing, quizzing, or conduct of discussion, including the level at which he pitches his instruction and the adequacy of his exposition. From indications as to whether students are bored or stimulated by his teaching, and in what particulars, he may be guided in fruitful redirection of his efforts.

Undoubtedly students are less able to judge the objectives and content of the course itself; but it may be useful to the instructor to know how it relates to their expectations, whether it seems sufficiently demanding, and what they think of its structure, assigned readings, division of time among lecturing, quizzing, discussion, laboratory, and so on. Whether or not he finds reason for altering the course in any particular, he is likely to discover the need of explaining more fully to students why certain things are done as they are.

The instructor should be interested in the reaction of students to his efforts; and while he should not go far in letting them influence his aims and methods, the view is fairly widespread among the Faculty that some improvement in instruction can result from systematic solicitation of student opinion. The Committee believes accordingly that a program should be instituted that will enable the Faculty to realize this result.

Use in staff assignments. A number of faculty members believe that student opinion can provide some guidance in making the most effective use of teaching talent. Some instructors are particularly effective in elementary or survey courses, others in more advanced courses; some have special appeal for the average student and others for the exceptional student. Information of this sort, adequately corroborated, may lead to staff reassignments which are in the best interests of the department and of the teacher concerned. Something may be learned, moreover, as to whether introductory courses are stimulating interest and arousing appropriate expectations, and whether courses in general are filling their intended role.

Bearing on student morale and standards. A leading reason for a student-opinion program is that many students, especially among the more serious, desire it. They believe that their reactions to courses and teaching have some value, and they want the opportunity to express their views. In particular they want evidence that the Faculty is concerned with the effectiveness of its efforts on the teaching side, and solicitation of student opinion is evidence of that concern. It is good for students to feel that they have some part in educational arrangements and are not mere recipients of impacts from above. Failure to reinstitute a student-opinion plan would be a backward step in faculty-student relations.

On the student side a greater contribution than to morale seems possible--an opportunity largely missed by the old plan. Solicitation of student opinion offers a fine opening for examining the criteria by which courses and teaching are judged, and thus in some degree

for elevating the standards by which students are guided. Even good students were admittedly superficial in the standards by which they marked the old questionnaire; and this superficiality is symptomatic of a common failure to appreciate educational essentials. Some improvement seems possible.

Any new questionnaire should be formulated, and supplementary guidance provided, with the aim of steering students away from superficial criteria. Thus the fairness of an examination is an incidental aspect of it; what matters is whether it tests real advancement toward the goals that animate a course. The mere readability of a textbook is not its essential feature; it should be judged rather by how rewarding it is to the industrious and reasonably able student. The best classroom exposition is not reflected in a neat clarity that largely obviates student effort and reflection, but in its stimulation of that effort and in the aid it provides toward achieving the highest level of understanding and appreciation within the competence of students. Students require guidance if they are to be governed by standards that the Faculty can approve. In recommending a new student-opinion program, the Committee looks upon appropriate guidance and emphasis of standards as an essential part of its recommendation.

Emphasis on good teaching. Behind the Committee's recommendation is its endorsement of the trend in the College in recent years toward greater emphasis on good instruction. A well conceived, conscientiously conducted student-opinion program is a symbol of this trend, and offers some hope of positive contribution toward promoting it.

IV

Defects of Student Ratings, Especially in Administrative Use

The problem discussed most extensively within the Committee was the usefulness of student ratings in deciding questions of promotion and salary increase. The most serious danger of misuse lies here, and the strongest faculty opposition to the old rating scheme arose in this connection. The Committee's conclusion is that this sort of administrative use of student opinion should be narrowly limited.

Complexity of good teaching. The educational contribution of faculty members must somehow be judged, but judgment is inherently complex and difficult. Excellence does not lie in a few simple traits but in a whole constellation of qualities. These pertain as much to the background planning and organization of materials into a course, often without textbook or precedent, and to the defining of goals, setting of standards, and devising of methods, as they do to actual classroom performance. Classroom presentation itself has many facets. Stress may be placed in differing degrees on amassing information, developing skills, arousing interest, stimulating students to work and educate themselves, promoting rigor and incisiveness of thought, provoking students to question their preconceptions and reorientate their thinking, inculcating new and higher standards of understanding and appreciation, or, perhaps, on achieving qualities of simple clarity and even entertainment for the less studious seekers of a degree.

Certainly rounded judgment of the diverse attributes of instruction is difficult at best. Students necessarily lack the experience and, in most instances, the capacity to render more than a very partial judgment. They can appreciate the difficulties neither in developing courses nor in effecting significant intellectual change in themselves. Even the common assumption that students can tell whether teaching "gets across" is dubious. What gets across best, or is so recognized, may well be what is least upsetting to established habits of mind and preferred ways of spending time.

Numerical ratings and averages. The deficiencies of student judgments become serious when they are expressed in numerical ratings and the ratings averaged for handy use. There is no single best combination of the diverse elements in good teaching, no single dimension against which a yardstick can properly be laid. In so far as the ratings by different students mean different things, and they are likely to, numerical coefficients based on them have a diffused and dubious meaning. If they do happen to represent about the same thing--certain striking qualities good or bad in instruction--but do not encompass the essential contribution of the teacher, coefficients are seriously misleading. If, as seems probable, the mass of students who dominate an average fail to appreciate the more disturbing, demanding qualities of the best instruction, injustice can result from reliance on numerical summaries.

The real menace of number ratings lies in the temptation to accept them at face value, imputing to them a dependability, even a "scientific" character, that is wholly unwarranted. Their mathematical form and undeniable convenience invite use of them in situations in which teaching must be judged, and the danger is present that factors which are not quantified will be overlooked or subordinated and student opinion will have exaggerated effect.

Limitation of administrative use. The conclusion reached by the Committee is not that student opinion should have no place at all in decisions affecting salary and promotion. Inevitably it does have a place, if only through rumor and casual remark. The conclusion is rather: (1) that because of the complexity of the teaching contribution and the limited experience of students, their views should be considered only at the department level where administrators know personally the instructor's work; and (2) that even at this level students' views should be considered only in the form of fairly full comments, not of number ratings and averages.

The former conclusion is of course in line with the 1948 recommendation; the latter is more restrictive. This Committee would recognize departmental autonomy, leaving it to the members of each department to decide whether student questionnaires should have administrative use.

Thus conducted and used, the student-opinion program would not directly help the Dean and the Executive Committee of the College in their difficult task of interpreting departmental recommendations for promotions and salary increases. Undoubtedly they would welcome some easy, dependable touchstone in the solution of their problem, but student opinion does not provide one. It would be most inappropriate to single out student appraisals for separate and direct recognition in passing on recommendations.

Such a restriction of use of student appraisals is certainly not out of line with developments in other comparable institutions. Of the twenty-five schools reporting some general solicitation of student opinion, only four indicated any use of the results in salary and promotion issues, and only one intended to continue such use, and it only in a limited fashion.

Thus the Committee rejects the conception which did most to make the old rating scheme distasteful to many members of the Faculty. The very phrase "student evaluation of the faculty" was presumptuous, even in the eyes of thoughtful students, and the Committee hopes it will not be applied to any further plan. The most that can be expected is a wide expression of students' views that will give some guidance to faculty members and perhaps be somewhat educational to students, with possibly some incidental administrative use. The Committee suggests that such phrases as "student-opinion questionnaire" and "student opinion of courses and teaching" be employed in references to this matter.

V

Proposals

The preceding analysis of the values and limitations of a student-opinion program leads the Committee to recommend to the College certain lines of action which have in part been indicated.

Successor committee. The present Committee was charged with the duty "to study and make recommendations concerning the principles and procedures" of such a program. The Committee has confined itself to principles and general procedures, since the working out of a detailed plan should follow faculty action. Thus, if the Faculty should approve these recommendations, there will remain a technical task of devising the specific items of questionnaires and details of procedure. A technical committee will be needed to perform this task.

In the Committee's view, however, what is needed is not just a technical committee but a standing committee which, perhaps with some assistance, can perform the immediate technical task. A standing committee would have several additional duties:

1. It would administer the program, taking steps periodically to carry it out.

2. It would be custodian of the policy, with discretion to modify procedures in small ways but to make larger changes only with faculty approval.

3. It would observe the operation of the plan and become the repository of experience, perhaps obviating the need of further committees such as the present one.

4. Under the proposal which follows it would be available to advise the departments in their part of the program.

General and specific questionnaires. The Committee believes that an effective questionnaire program should be in two parts, one College-wide and the other adapted to departmental or even more limited situations.

For a student-opinion program to have weight in the affairs of the College, it should be universal in application and uniform in important respects. If students are to feel that their views are respected, so that their responses warrant serious thought, the program should be College-sponsored and certain challenging questions should be asked regarding all courses. Particularly if the program is to have educational effect in raising standards, the College must assume responsibility for it. For a plan to have general and continuing application, the College should provide questionnaire blanks and promote the program in other ways.

On the other hand, one of the first conclusions reached by the Committee is that a single questionnaire of uniform application does not meet all the needs of the various departments. Instructional aims and procedures differ a good deal--as between literature and natural science courses, for instance--and the specific matters on which information may be sought permit a range of emphasis in the questions asked. Thus it seems desirable to limit a College questionnaire to a few broad questions and leave it to departments and individuals to seek more specialized information. Departments should be encouraged to supplement the College questionnaire, but such action should not be mandatory.

The proposed standing committee would be available to assist departments, as they desire it, in the formulation of questionnaires; and it is expected that the committee would learn from the diverse experience in departments. Certain departments have been much interested in testing student reactions to courses and teaching, and they may well have useful observations to pass on to other departments.

The College questionnaire. The College questionnaire should be designed to evoke fairly full comment and discussion. This type of response is more demanding than the marking of a letter or number, and if the student has something to contribute it requires that he take pains to formulate his idea. His formulation will throw light on the significance of his response. It is the common view of faculty members that this kind of answer is most helpful.

Questions should be designed to invite careful thinking at a respectable level. Thus the student might be asked first to state the objectives of a course as he sees them and then to comment critically on them from the standpoint of his purposes and expectations in taking the course.

As far as possible the questionnaire should separate the student's reaction to the course itself and to the classroom performance of the teacher. The contribution of the senior staff member lies in both areas, but often mainly in the former; that of junior staff members usually in the latter area.

Administration and use of questionnaire. The handling of a questionnaire does not seem to require the centralization and uniformity of the old procedure. Blanks can be handed

out by instructors and collected by them. Experiment should be possible on such matters as whether it is better to have students fill in questionnaires in class or at home.

Some general rule is necessary as to the minimum frequency with which student opinion is solicited. The Committee suggests that courses should be covered once a year, with discretion in the department to exempt small graduate courses and other courses for special reasons. More frequent coverage may often be desirable when an instructor is seeking answers to particular questions.

The time for filling in questionnaires should be flexible. The old method has been criticized because the standard time fixed by the College often seemed inappropriate in relation to examinations and other features of a course. In some courses students cannot achieve well considered opinions until near the end of the course or after it is over. The 1941 plan provided that questionnaires should be filled out after courses were completed, and this procedure might well be tried.

The standing committee should consider the problem of publicity for developing in the student body a cooperative attitude toward the questionnaire program. Means should be sought of guiding students toward standards of judgment that will increase the value of their opinions and improve their scholarly performance. Perhaps at the time of registration students should be given a statement describing the program and suggesting the need of reflecting on the objectives and conduct of their courses. Students may thus be guided away from trivial criteria and toward standards the Faculty can endorse.

When filled out, questionnaires should of course be available to the instructor concerned. Any other use within the department should be decided democratically by its members. Department chairmen and executive committees may receive some help from student opinion in planning course and staff arrangements and on salary and promotion questions, and material may be provided for supporting recommendations to the Dean and Executive Committee of the College.

The Committee is convinced that whatever is done should be agreeable to the faculty members involved. The old plan aroused strong feelings and much resentment; and it seems better to have no plan at all than to allow majority action to impose on individuals procedures which they dislike and which may be damaging to their morale.

The Committee believes that a program which focuses on the improvement not only of teaching but also of learning, which avoids dubious ratings, and which limits administrative use to the departmental level and is optional there, will preserve all the values of such a program and will provide an acceptable compromise among opposing viewpoints.

L. O. Brockway
I. M. Copi
J. L. Davis
Sidney Fine
Wilfred Kaplan
J. C. O'Neill
R. W. Pidd
E. L. Walker
Shorey Peterson, Chairman

APPENDIX II

In October, 1967, a student course evaluation committee met for the first time to consider the feasibility of course evaluation at the University of Michigan. The students involved concerned themselves with the eventual publication of an objective and comprehensive course evaluation booklet. With the assistance of various members of the faculty, several of whom were members of the SACUA Subcommittee concurrently studying student course evaluation, the Committee tentatively drew up several questionnaires designed to elicit responsible student opinion on the classroom experience.

One of these early instruments was administered in two test classes in the late weeks of the Fall, 1967, Semester. The Committee judged the value of the information provided in these experimental ventures, considered procedural alternatives to effect maximum efficiency and accordingly modified the instrument itself and its proposed administration.

The forty-question document decided upon in March, 1968, was distributed in forty-five courses, primarily of interest to freshmen, with the cooperation of the faculty members concerned who allotted class time for distribution and completion of the questionnaire. The computerized results were digested by members of the Committee who attempted to present an objective and statistically valid picture of student opinion in print. The eventual consensus products were sent to individual faculty members who were asked to comment for publication or suggest areas which might need editing.

The final collection of edited evaluations of faculty comments was published and distributed gratis to incoming freshmen during the orientation periods of Summer, 1968.

Faculty and student reaction revealed undeniable weaknesses in this first formal effort of the Committee. The questionnaire, despite its history of trial and error experimentation was not entirely successful in providing essential understanding of student opinion. The process of interpreting computer statistics left much to be desired. Size limitations and publication deadlines restrained the Committee's efforts to incorporate appropriate detail in each report. Incomplete computer statistics provided unsatisfactory pictures of courses which elicited a wide range of student opinion. For an initial effort, however, the members of the Committee were convinced by the general reception of the booklet that it was moderately successful.

Over the summer the Committee concerned itself with plans for evaluating all appropriate undergraduate L.S. & A. courses offered in the Fall Semester, 1968. It was felt that many of the problems described above were inherent in any program calling for published evaluations in a university of this size, and within the restricting limits of the trimester schedule. The student committee sought a fresh approach to the concept, hoping to provide not only an information vehicle for students, but also suggestions of value to faculty members considering changes in course structure or methods. The Committee saw itself as a potential research arm of a larger effort to improve the lines of communication between faculty and student body, working not only to catalogue the facts of the educational experience offered at the University, but also to influence what should be a continual process of change designed to improve that experience.

The plans arrived upon for this year include a unique and hopefully advantageous program. The Association for Academic Evaluation in conjunction with the SACUA Subcommittee on Course Evaluation (see SACUA Report) decided upon a two-part questionnaire. Part I is objective and incorporates many of the questions suggested by the SACUA Subcommittee. Both mean average and distribution figures for each course will be determined by computer. Part II of the questionnaire solicits written student opinion and is intended to supplement the statistics provided in Part I with more specific details and considered personal opinion and suggestions.

In the 14th week of the Fall Semester, 1968, the questionnaire will be distributed to all undergraduate classes of the College of Literature, Sciences, and Arts, excepting those taught primarily by fellows as an unavoidable degree requirement (i.e. English 123). At the request of Department Chairmen, grade III teaching fellows may have their courses evaluated. Packets of questionnaires, specific instructions and questions of a descriptive nature (i.e. class enrollment) will be provided.

In light of the Committee's concern for creating a dialogue, faculty statements will also be solicited. The intention is to provide for faculty members a medium in which to express those details about course structure, methods and/or goals which students might find valuable.

When the material has returned from the computers, a selected group of students, seniors in specific concentration curricula, will digest the information available on each course, considering the full range of student suggestion and opinion. The computer results and complete collection of written student responses will be returned to the faculty members. The Committee intends to be a constructive force in providing positive influence on the faculty-student dialogue. Feedback should be approached by faculty members as an indication of student interest in contributing to the educational experience.

Discussions will be scheduled along departmental lines, coinciding with the pre-registration period. All students and faculty members will be encouraged to attend. These meetings will be divided into two parts. The first will consist of a formal presentation of the Committee's research by those selected seniors (see above) who have familiarized themselves with the material. The presentation will be oral synopses intended to give an overview of each department and briefly consider its courses and staff.

Immediately following the formal presentation by the panel of seniors, the floor will be opened to discussion. The discussions will be informal, concerning themselves with the results of the research and all other topics of interest to the department and its students. Faculty members will be urged to participate in the discussions and invited to join the panel in answering student queries.

Students who do not attend departmental discussions will be provided with alternatives. The information will be made permanently available in a staffed office shortly to be opened near the Counseling areas. Staff members will assist students in selecting courses by issuing appropriate files for student examination.

The advantages of this program are varied. Information will be most easily supplemented and when necessary, deleted. Students will be allowed to interpret the full impact of opinion and not be restricted to the interpretations of fellow students. The structure of our discussions will open new areas of mutual concern to faculty and students alike.

It has constantly been the intent of the Committee to provide information regarding student evaluation to the faculty as well as to the students. The decision to relay the information back to the faculty was based on the assumption that student feedback will result in improved teaching and will consequently promote the students' interests. We are engaged in an activity that is new, and has to be "sold" to both the faculty and the students. We are proposing a program that is responsible, and broad enough in scope to be useful to both groups. In addition to the comments listed in the Committee Report, the program that we propose will, we think, be one that accurately gauges student opinion. By allowing the Committee class time for the distribution of questionnaires, the professor will be assured of a complete range of student opinion. This greatly decreases the possibility that only unfavorable (or very favorable) comments will be included. We are approaching teacher evaluations with the care necessary to assure ourselves of accurate data, realizing that a professor's professional reputation may be endangered through a careless job. We hope that our program will serve as a catalyst to promote better communication between the faculty and the students, and will encourage students to give the selection of courses more thought than they presently do. The communication problems inherent in a large university will not be solved by a fifty-question questionnaire. We do hope, however, that the format that was chosen for the presentation of the statistical data will promote a student/faculty dialogue on the issues involved. The data provided to the students will fulfill a need for information describing the faculty and their teaching methods. The student will not have to rely on the opinion of one or two fellow students to select his courses. Accurate information, we feel, will allow the student a greater range of possibilities for course selection; allowing him to select courses that suit his particular needs and interests.

Faculty cooperation is essential for the implementation of the proposed program. Therefore the Committee is submitting these requests for SACUA consideration:

1. That faculty members aid in the distribution and collection of questionnaires, providing up to thirty minutes of class time for the completion of said questionnaire. This testing period will take place in the fourteenth week of class (this semester from November 25 to December 5).

2. That each instructor respond to the faculty statement request.

3. That the faculty be encouraged to participate in the Departmental Discussions.

4. That the faculty be encouraged to provide suggestions for both the procedural methods and the content and format of the Departmental Discussions.

Instructor's Name _____

U. of M. Association for Academic Evaluation

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Put all answers on this sheet, using No. 2 pencil ONLY.
In some cases, the question is NOT APPLICABLE; so indicate.
Please fill in Course Title and Instructor's Name above. Do not sign this questionnaire.

For the first three sections, give your reaction to the statement, using:
a) STRONGLY AGREE b) AGREE c) NEUTRAL d) DISAGREE e) STRONGLY DISAGREE

COURSE

	a	b	c	d	e
1. This course has been challenging in the sense of demanding concentration and intelligence.	—	—	—	—	—
2. This course was stimulating, requiring independent and creative thinking	—	—	—	—	—
3. Too much material was presented to be adequately covered in the time allotted.	—	—	—	—	—
4. More credit should be given for the amount of time spent in this course.	—	—	—	—	—
5. The major objectives set for the course were adequately achieved.	—	—	—	—	—
6. There was unnecessary repetition in the lectures, recitations and readings.	—	—	—	—	—
7. This course made a significant contribution to my education.	—	—	—	—	—

INSTRUCTOR

	a	b	c	d	e
8. The instructor was enthusiastic and interested in his subject.	—	—	—	—	—
9. The instructor was well organized.	—	—	—	—	—
10. The instructor had poor speaking ability.	—	—	—	—	—
11. The instructor gave clear explanations.	—	—	—	—	—
12. The instructor should use a greater variety of classroom techniques.	—	—	—	—	—
13. The instructor shared the values and ideals of the field with his students.	—	—	—	—	—
14. The instructor produced an appreciation of scientific and scholarly research.	—	—	—	—	—
15. The instructor presented mainly a one-sided view of the field.	—	—	—	—	—
16. The instructor was sensitive to the level of student comprehension	—	—	—	—	—
17. The instructor got to know, and be known by, his students.	—	—	—	—	—
18. The instructor conveyed general perspectives as well as specific facts.	—	—	—	—	—

ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS

	a	b	c	d	e
19. Standards for student performance were reasonable.	—	—	—	—	—
20. The grading system was fair.	—	—	—	—	—
21. Comments and criticisms of student work were instructive.	—	—	—	—	—
22. The exams and quizzes were a good test of students' mastery of the course material.	—	—	—	—	—
23. The exams emphasized original thought rather than memorization of facts.	—	—	—	—	—
24. The exams concentrated on: a) lectures b) readings/text c) lectures & readings d) other	—	—	—	—	—
25. The comparison to other courses, I spent ____ time on this course. a) much more b) somewhat more c) about the same d) somewhat less e) much less	—	—	—	—	—

GENERAL

Rate the following items on a scale between OUTSTANDING and POOR (or NOT APPLICABLE - N.A.)

	NA	O			P
26. The text	—	—	—	—	—
27. The assigned problems	—	—	—	—	—
28. The reading assignments	—	—	—	—	—
29. The papers/written projects	—	—	—	—	—
30. The exams and quizzes	—	—	—	—	—
31. The recitations/discussions	—	—	—	—	—
32. The laboratories	—	—	—	—	—
33. The lectures	—	—	—	—	—
34. The over-all quality of the course	—	—	—	—	—

We hope that you will view these proposals as a responsible step towards a greater faculty/student dialogue and towards greater student involvement in the educational process.

Finally, we wish to thank the SACUA Committee on Course and Teacher Evaluation for its helpful guidance and support.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Stocker
Frank P. Viviano

PERSONAL

	a	b	c	d	e
35. I am a: a) FR. b) Soph. c) Jr. d) Sr. e) Grad					
36. This course is: a) in my major b) in a cognate field c) for distribution d) an elective					
37. My grade I expect in this course is p) Pass a) A b) B c) C d) D e) E/Fail	p				
38. My cumulative average is: a) below 2.0 b) 2.0–2.49 c) 2.5–2.99 d) 3.0–3.49 e) 3.5 or above					

OPEN-END

Feel free to make any appropriate comments (or none) on the following topics.
The sub-topics are only suggestions. be CONCISE.

CLASS SIZE: Were the lectures and recitations too big, too small? Would the lecture have been more effective as recitations or vice versa? Was there opportunity for student participation, suggestions and criticisms?

RECITATION: Name of recitation LEADER _____

Did the recitation leader lecture or encourage discussions? Did he clarify the lecturer or add other worthwhile material? Was he responsive to questions and criticisms? committed to one point of view? sensitive to the difficulties students were encountering in the course? Consider also items from INSTRUCTOR which may apply.

LABORATORIES: Did they add to understanding of principles being taught? Was the lab instructor useful as a guide in using the equipment, running the experiments?

LECTURER: Any outstanding - good or bad - characteristics of the lecturer not covered under INSTRUCTOR. State reasons for giving ratings there of a) or e).

ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS: Were they unclear, too difficult, trivial, never discussed in class? Were the readings useful, readily available, suited to the course and the class level?

COURSE IN GENERAL: Any comments or criticisms: things you would like to see changed, things that were good and should be kept. Should it move faster or slower, be more in depth or more general, have different prerequisites ....